ISI Activities in Assam

2949. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item appearing in the Times of India dated 11th March, 2000 under the caption "ISI fomenting terrorism in Assam, says U.S. State Deptt.";

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether Government had taken up the matter with President Clinton during his recent visit to India;

(d) if so, his reaction thereto and if not, the reason for not raising this matter with him; and

(e) what further steps have been taken to raise the matter with the friendly foreign Governments and what results ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA) : (a) Yes, Sir. The news item is based on a report that appeared in a US newspaper, the Washington Times on 10th March. The US newspaper quotes an unnamed US State Department official as saying that the ISI is helping the militants in Assam.

(b) There is growing international alertness of facts of Pakistan's support and sponsorship of cross-border terrorism in India, as evidenced in the above quoted report.

(c) Yes, Sir. Regional issues, including the problem of cross-border terrorism, were discussed with President Clinton during his visit to India.

(d) The two sides expressed their determination to intensify co-operation in combating terrorism. President Clinton acknowledged that there are elements within the Pakistani Government that have supported those engaged in violence in Kashmir. He also asked Pakistan to help create conditions for a bilateral dialogue with India to succeed.

(e) Government takes every opportunity to draw the attention of the international community to Pakistan's support and sponsorship of cross-border terrorism in India. Government has also initiated co-operation with a number of countries on measures to combat terrorism. Bilateral Joint Working Groups on Counter-terrorism have been set up, including with the United States, to intensify co-operation in this area.